



UNION ASSEMBLY

Union Assembly Minutes

Agenda for the meeting held: **TUESDAY 6th FEBRUARY 2024, 3PM – 6PM**

Agenda Item 1|Introductions

Minutes of meeting 05/12/23: [Union Assembly Minutes 05.12.23.docx](#)

Minutes of emergency meeting 11/01/24: [Union Assembly Minutes 11.01.24.docx](#)

In attendance: Cerys Evans, Sam Hedges, Jack Watson, Josh Newsham, Thomas Cross, Molly O'Reilly-Kime, Reece Griffiths & Luke Owen, Rory O'Ceallaigh, Luke Donlan, Madison Lardner, Mirutha, Jake Leonard, Adam Bucknall, Rebecca Spiers, Maciej Marcinkiewicz, Gabriella Oppong, Srota Bhowmik, Charlie Seddon, Hannah Bywood, and Matthew Lamb. Phoebe Teasdale was in attendance as Chair.

The Chair introduced the meeting and outlined the apologies: Santi Siabato, Harrison Stewart, Frankie Lynch-Brown, and Huseyn Guliyev.

Update on actions:

- Cerys Evans circulated a form after Union Assembly regarding the FTO Restructure with further questions, 15 responded. Lots of helpful feedback that informed the development of the byelaws. Feedback generally really positive, a small number disagreed that they were able to share their true feelings and opinions. Some asked for more detail and earlier consultation. Happy to share headline, anonymised results.
- Cerys Evans agenda item on proxies on today's agenda.
- Sam Hedges update on Lead Rep training. We are in-contact with ERS to run training on employability and CV-writing. We have a new staff member able to plan and run future training. I have a lot of people in the University interested in speaking to Reps.

Minutes of meeting on 05/12/23 are approved.

Minutes of emergency meeting on 11/01/24 are approved.

Agenda Item 2 |For Discussion | Full-Time Officer Reports

President: [Union Assembly FTO Report - President 06.02.24.docx](#)

Cerys Evans presented their report and flagged their work on FTO Review and approval from Trustee Board. Cerys encouraged attendees to consider the roles currently up for nominations. Further cost of living proposals have been submitted. For Supper Club this term, we have fed over 500 students and ran out of food each evening.

Thomas Cross – what will the transport policy look like? Will you consult students?

Cerys Evans – I am planning to bring a proposal next Union Assembly on how the SU believed transport money should be spent. For instance, the use of parking fines income by the University. Laying down expectations for the buses, parking, and transport for students. It will be as a motion so will come to Union Assembly as a first-step. People are welcome to get involved.

VP Education: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Education 06.02.24.docx](#)

Sam Hedges presented their report, explained the postponement of the Know Your Rights campaign, the initiation of the Wednesday Afternoons campaign, and provided some background regarding the Curriculum Transformation Project. Sam emphasised the need for further student engagement in the CTP.

Matthew Lamb – do you think the Know Your Rights campaign would be more feasible with the restructure of the FTO Team?

Sam Hedges – yes, we were understaffed in Michaelmas Term within the Academic Rep Team. If I can revive the campaign, I will.

VP Societies & Media: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Societies & Media 06.02.24.docx](#)

Santi Siabato was unable to attend but Cerys Evans presented some comments on their behalf. Santi provided an update on society affiliations, invited feedback on Refreshers, and provided an update on tatser sessions.

Hannah Bywood – there were a lot of last minute changes due to rain and room changes at Refreshers, communication on this was good. We required power but were only told 1 hour before which wasn't ideal.

Madison Lardner – I think the split between the two spaces was not ideal. Some attendees were unaware of activity in LICA.

Adam Bucknall – we had a conversation at Societies Committee about future communication.

VP Sport: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Sport 06.02.24.docx](#)

Jack Watson presented their report, reflected on the recent Women+ in Sport session and club photos, though less attendance from societies than hoped.

No questions.

VP Union Development: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Union Development 06.02.24.docx](#)

Harrison Stewart was unable to attend so Cerys Evans presented on their behalf and invited questions directly to Harrison.

Hannah Bywood – the Students' Union and JCR training took over space reserved for society events. It was sorted on the night, but it is concerning, some societies were miffed.

Cerys Evans – I have not heard anything about this and will discuss with staff.

VP Welfare: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Welfare 06.02.24.docx](#)

Josh Newsham presented their report and provided updates on the Israel Palestine statement and ongoing engagement with Jewish Society and Islamic Society. Josh emphasises the ongoing support for students affected by the conflict and the positive feedback received regarding the statement. We have not seen a rise in hate crime on campus, though there have been some high-profile instances and a higher risk of occurrence. The first Wellbeing and Inclusion group met and some work on the cost of living, including a bid for a gender expression fund. The Sugarbus is now a free service, we are proud to keep people safe remove cost as a barrier.

No questions.

Cerys Evans provided an update on some matters from the Trustee Board. Cerys and Josh have now initiated a review of the LCO roles, led by an external consultant. We will be looking at other Students' Unions, the structure, workload, pay, and all other aspects of the roles. This will be taking place behind the scenes.

Cerys Evans explained that this forms part of an on-going review of the reward, recognition, and appreciation of volunteer roles across the Students' Union. This includes a review of the Welcome Rep role; their training, support, induction, and responsibilities. We will be working with JCRs and SCRs.

Agenda Item 3 |For Approval | Wednesday Afternoons and Timetabling

Sam Hedges, VP Education

Jack Watson, VP Sport

Santi Siabato, VP Societies & Media

Motion: [Agenda Item 3 - Wednesday Afternoons and Timetabling.docx](#)

Sam Hedges presented the paper and explained the equality, diversity and inclusion implications of teaching hours beyond the policy. Sam explained that we expect that the University to now attempt to change the policy. We are currently collecting data from students through Question of the Week and would encourage everyone to support the campaign.

Jack Watson – the policy went down well at Faculty Forums last night.

Thomas Cross – I fully support. Would we ever include a 9am to 5pm teaching day?

Sam Hedges – I would support that, but our current work should be focused on compliance with the current timetabling policy. The current hours are very difficult to manage alongside part time work.

Matthew Lamb – I support this. Are we planning to communicate to students their rights?

Sam Hedges – we are doing this now, our video has over 2000 views and i can share the full policy with everyone.

Rory O'Ceallaigh - The policy only covers sports and undergraduates. I would like more of a focus on society activity on a Wednesday afternoons and the inclusion of postgraduates.

Sam Hedges – that is where I want to head, to be in a position to expand the scope of the policy to cover societies activity and equality between undergraduates and postgraduates.

Madison Lardner – a lot of sports members also miss teaching on Wednesday mornings for away games. Some teams are struggling in BUCS as everyone is in teaching.

Sam Hedges – I am often stuck in a loop with the University as everything is looped into CTP, which only comes into force in 2026. Staying within the current policy avoids this. I am happy to pass this on to my successor to keep the pressure on.

Josh Newsham – what weight will the passing of this paper give in meetings with the University? We should look at the short-term measures we can put-in in partnership with departments.

Sam Hedges – I sit on a lot of University committees. This paper means I can present this as Union belief, rather than my own opinion. Provides the support of the whole organisation.
Charlie Seddon – we discussed at Faculty Forum last night. Is placement covered in this policy?

Sam Hedges – the University policy does not count placement as teaching time, I don't agree with this. Passing this paper allows us to pursue further changes on this, coverage of postgraduates, and other activities.

Cerys Evans – I want to clarify why we want to support a flawed policy that doesn't reflect actual practice. We have a few options as a Union Assembly. We could draft a new policy, but they aren't going to listen to it. We want to get them to do what they have said they are going to do. Once they have done that, we can push for a better policy. We could get agreement, but they won't stick to it. This should be a baseline expectation and we are simply looking for compliance with the existing policy.

Matthew Lamb – do you think moving teaching to a Saturday is a realistic possibility?

Sam Hedges – when offered, the University did not take up the offer of resolving this in collaboration with the SU. I have gone through the correct process with the University and some ideas were throw around at the time.

Rory O'Ceallaigh – are there safeguards in place to stop the University from simply amending the policy to something worse?

Sam Hedges – with motion gives me the backing to pressure the University to not change the policy to the detriment of students.

Vote:

FOR 18

AGAINST 0

ABSTAIN 1

Union Assembly approved the motion.

Agenda Item 4 |For Approval | Harm Reduction Drugs and Alcohol

Josh Newsham, VP Welfare

Motion: [Agenda Item 4 - Harm Reduction Drugs and Alcohol.docx](#)

Josh Newsham presented the paper, explained the previous lapsed Union stance, and the important of the policy and the failure of zero tolerance policies. Josh emphasised the need for the Students' Union to provide support to students at risk of harm from alcohol and drug use. Josh explained the need for students to be informed of the implications for their physical and mental health. An on-paper harm reduction policy has been secured from the University but students' knowledge of this appears extremely limited. The motion advocates for the Students' Union to lobby at a local and national level for change, and commits us to delivering training for student leaders.

Molly O'Reilly-Kime – there are testing kits that have been extremely useful tools elsewhere. Are there any plans to offer this for students?

Josh Newsham – we need to recognise that some drugs use is illegal. It is our responsibility to help students to make informed decisions. The tests are very expensive and I am hoping to source funding from the institution. At the very least, I would like testing kits at some of our major events such as Welcome Week.

Matthew Lamb – I believe zero tolerance policies do work and that it should be properly enforced. What drugs do you believe should be decriminalised?

Josh Newsham – I disagree. A harm reduction does not encourage more people to use drugs but helps those that do use drugs to better understand the risks. In my opinion, and through research, zero tolerance policies do not work.

Matthew Lamb – do you think you are encouraging up-take of drugs?

Josh Newsham – if they are taking drugs, they aren't listening to the law anyway. Police forces in some areas of the UK have said this themselves.

Charlie Seddon – completely agree with the policy, zero tolerance doesn't work. In medicine, GMC requires zero tolerance on drugs. How will the Union support student medics to come forward for support?

Josh Newsham – I am happy to pick this up after the meeting with you.

Madison Lardner – with the CAT teams in the College, are you going to give them more training to make them more welcoming and supportive for those coming with issues related to drugs use?

Josh Newsham – one of my first steps is to encourage the University to improve training for CAT teams as well as other staff, in particular to notice the impact of drugs and alcohol on students. Empowering students to come forward is really important. I am looking at a collaboration with the NHS to provide a sexual health-style drop-in for drugs and alcohol use in the Union. I am happy to add training for university staff into the resolutions for the policy.

Charlie Seddon – primary screening is only as effective as your engagement in it. In the education are you just focusing on risks, but also a balanced discussion about the motivations for drugs use.

Josh Newsham – we don't have the expertise in the University of Union. We need to work with specialists to inform our messaging, training, and activity and ensure we are empowering people to come forward. To encourage engagement, we will emphasise the importance of confidentiality and training for student leaders who will be having these conversations to uphold these values.

Vote:

FOR 16

AGAINST 1

ABSTAIN 1

Union Assembly approve the motion.

Josh Newsham – I am happy to take some of these conversations further and I would encourage you to get involved in this campaign, should you be interested.

Agenda Item 5 | For Approval | Proxy and Pre-emptive Voting

Cerys Evans, President

Paper: [Agenda Item 5 - Proxy and Pre-emptive Voting.docx](#)

Byelaw with Tracked Changes: [Agenda Item 5 - Tracked Changes to the Union Assembly Byelaw.docx](#)

Cerys Evans presented the paper and asked to take the paper in two parts: proxy voting and pre-emptive voting. Cerys went through the proposed changes to point 5. of the Union Assembly Byelaw, explained their thinking behind the proposal, and requests from past JCR Presidents on Union Assembly. This could mean we have more representation at meetings but could risk allowing FTOs or other accountable to the meeting to avoid scrutiny. Cerys explained how proxies could work in different part of Union Assembly.

Sam Hedges – I approve this change. I don't think the FTOs should be able to send proxies, so I believe they should be exempt. For groups with a Chair, for instance LCO Forums could have the opportunity to choose who the proxy is.

Cerys Evans – we normally bring things under the assumption it should be passed. This is more a discussion piece. I am happy for this to be amended.

Luke Donlan – I am just querying the use of “extraordinary” circumstances. For me this means serious situations not attendance at a lecture.

Cerys Evans – has anyone got a suggestion for another word we could use?

Molly O'Reilly-Kime – “extenuating”? This is quite common in byelaws.

Adam Bucknall – it isn't necessary to include as it is up for approval of the Chair anyway.

Matthew Lamb – I like the safeguards put in-place but I'm not sure how it would work for my position. What issue is this trying to resolve? Should we be focusing on why people can't attend.

Cerys Evans – the policy is reliant on having a Chair who is comfortable with saying no. I take the point that extraordinary isn't needed.

Rory O'Ceallaigh - I agree extraordinary isn't needed. Perhaps an additional sentence to say something along the lines of “members shouldn't take the ability to send a proxy to avoid scrutiny”.

Luke Owen – we could have a supplementary note to explain what Union Assembly intended when this change was passed as guidance for the Chair.

Cerys Evans – we could take out the extraordinary word and add a note to clarify expectations around attendance.

Adam Bucknall – we should update the Society Committee Terms of Reference to include society leagues and arrangements for this.

Thomas Cross – we should keep this under 3 sentences, we LCOs really appreciate any flexibility.

Cerys Evans proposed new wording: “Proxy voting by a member of Assembly shall be permitted pending the approval of the chair. Proxy voting should be delegated to someone with a reasonable level of responsibility within a relevant area of the Students' Union. The expectation is that members should endeavour to attend assembly where possible”

Sam Hedges – asked if this could be further amended to: “Proxy voting by a non-FTO member of Assembly shall be permitted pending the approval of the chair. Proxy voting should be delegated to someone with a reasonable level of responsibility within a relevant area of the Students' Union. The expectation is that members should endeavour to attend assembly where possible”.

Cerys Evans – I can take this away after a vote for digital confirmation of the exact wording.

Vote on proxy voting (5. In Union Assembly Byelaw):

FOR 17

AGAINST 0

ABSTAIN 1

Union Assembly approve the proxy voting part of the motion, pending digital approval of the exact wording.

Cerys Evans introduced the idea of pre-emptive voting and went through the proposed new clause. Cerys explained the need for “extraordinary” use as the need for pre-emptive voting for important and controversial matters in the future. The exclusion of pre-emptive votes where proposals are amended was also discussed as well as the need for the representation of communities where their representatives are unable to attend.

Luke Owen – this would be used in contentious issues, surely you need to be in-attendance to engage in discussion to make an informed vote. I would prefer a smaller number of informed votes.

Cerys Evans – good point

Matthew Lamb – it might be a little redundant now we have proxy voting. It could also be useful where we struggle to meet quorum. We aren't just here to rubber stamp matters.

Madison Lardner – you don't get enough information just from the papers, you need to hear the discussion.

Reece Griffiths – if we have sensitive or difficult matters, how do we make sure that important voices are present where their voices are necessary for an informed vote.

Cerys Evans – this took place in Trustee Board for the approval of the changes to FTO positions. Harrison was away and wrote a short statement outlining his comments and his voting intention. It is a useful test case, though the meetings are slightly different, and the proposal had already been through Union Assembly. As Chair, I read through the pre-emptive votes and comments submitted, this would allow those voices to be heard if unable to attend. A lot of this is at the choice of the Chair. This could open the door for comments from students too.

Rory O'Ceallaigh - in our hypothetical scenario, I wouldn't feel comfortable voting without key stakeholders in the room. Is there scope to delay votes? In those situations, I feel it would be more appropriate to delay a vote so we are not voting on behalf of a group we do not have the remit to represent.

Cerys Evans – we do have quite poor attendance from some LCOs, if we were to delay votes in this instance, we might be waiting a long time. Though we are reviewing LCO roles. Often on projects the timing can be more important than the decision itself. We haven't really come up with a great case where we would want to use it.

Thomas Cross – proxies could bring in a statement and we have had people join via Teams

Sam Hedges – there is precedent for this with the FTOs, could we write this in just for the FTOs. A lot of the abuse that would not happen if it was just FTOs.

Cerys Evans – proxy voting isn't appropriate for FTOs, but this would allow FTOs to vote in-advance where unable to attend.

Union Assembly agreed to vote for pre-emptive voting for just FTOs.

Luke Owen – I still believe that if necessary, the vote should be postponed.

Sam Hedges – for a Union Assembly of, in total, around 50, 4 votes aren't as influential as they may appear. Some FTO teams are very cohesive but other are not. If Santi had not been available for the FTO restructure, had not been in support, and had been unwell, we would have missed an important contribution.

Adam Bucknall – the difference in wording is quite important in the byelaw, the use of "extraordinary" is very important. Chair's discretion is also very important in this.

Molly O'Reilly-Kime – I feel there are a lot of scenarios where proxy or pre-emptive voting is compulsory, which isn't the proposal.

Luke Owen – for a controversial matter, we would want the full FTO team present.

Vote:

FOR 16

AGAINST 1

ABSTAIN 1

Union Assembly approved pre-emptive voting for the Full-Time Officers.

Agenda Item 6 |For Information | Resignation of Students with Disabilities Officers & Women+ Officer

Josh Newsham, VP Welfare

Verbal Update

Josh Newsham provided a verbal update and passed on comments provided by the outgoing Officers. Josh discussed their struggles with a lack of support from the Students' Union and the scope of the LCO Review.

Thomas Cross – two forums without representation in a week reflects poorly on the Union. Please complete the review as soon as possible.

Matthew Lamb – how will the roles we filled democratically? What was the justification in the Women+ disapproval of the Union Assembly policy on Israel Palestine.

Josh Newsham – we are approaching elections, so we have the opportunity to invite the newly elected people to take on the role earlier. On the Israel Palestine statement, they felt it did not represent the views of their members. They are not an Officer of the Union any more, I can ask if they'd like me to provide more details to Union Assembly.

Molly O'Reilly-Kime – these are my opinions, there is a lot of work that goes into LCO roles. Today I have done 4 hours alone. Support isn't always available. For my role, there has been a lack of cognisance of my role and the forum. I have had to chase people to be involved in projects that I should have been involved with from the start. These roles should be paid. The nominations are too early this year and I believe the request of incoming LCOs to take on the role earlier is unreasonable.

Josh Newsham – I am happy to have a discussion as a Liberation team. A few years ago, we changed from Part-Time Officers to Liberation & Campaigns Officers. I don't think we are clear about what the role of LCOs is. Their role is to represent the community. We have inherited a system that is not fit for purpose or willing to change. As a Union, we are open to change, now is the time to review the roles. The Trustee Board has released some resource to allow us to do the review early to allow us to have the conversations now. I want to know what we can do now to support you better.

Agenda Item 7 | For Approval | Changes to Sports Committee Terms of Reference

Jack Watson, VP Sport

Terms of Reference with Tracked Changes: [Agenda Item 7 - Sport Committee Terms of Reference.docx](#)

Jack Watson presented the paper and prior approval by Sports Board and Sports Committee.

Adam Bucknall – I would like to raise previous point around outdated terms of references for Societies Committee.

Vote:

FOR 18

AGAINST 0

ABSTAIN 0

Union Assembly approved the changes to the Terms of Reference.

Agenda Item 8 | Any Other Business

Thomas Cross invited attendees to come to the Trans* Rights protest tomorrow in Alexandra Square.

Josh Newsham wished everyone happy LGBTQ+ Month and emphasised the need for leaders to take the time to reflect on our practice and ensure we are working inclusively.

Chair thanked Union Assembly for their acceptance and supportiveness.

Cerys Evans asked if everyone was happy with how they brought the agenda item 5, without prior discussion.

Thomas Cross – I find it useful. I changed my mind based on what people said. For bigger things, having it one to one makes more sense.

Adam Bucknall – for something very Union Assembly specific this makes sense.

Matthew Lamb – on the terms of consultation, is it feasible for everything we discuss and pass?

Luke Owen – could we put it for discussion and approving at the next meeting would have been helpful.

Maciej Marcinkiewicz – an email chain beforehand could have been simpler and helpful.

The Chair closed the meeting.